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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3788
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1986
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 5272
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 5293
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8269
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2862
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 5952
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 9843
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 8359
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3267
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 3793
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 3694
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 3864
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 2582
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 2960
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 3238
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0701
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2971
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 003304

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: INDIA WARMLY WELCOMES VISITING PAKISTANI
OPPOSITION POLITICIANS

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Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: The Indian government rolled out the red carpet for visiting Pakistani People's Party Parliamentarians, arranging a meeting with PM Singh, a lunch hosted by MEA MOS E. Ahamed, and meetings with BJP supremos LK Advani and Jaswant Singh. The meetings show the value India is placing on people-to-people exchanges, as well as Delhi's interest in diversifying its political dialogue with Pakistanis. One member of the delegation, Punjab PPP leader Qasim Zia, told us PPP head Benazir Bhutto was committed to return from exile in Dubai before the October 2007 elections, and disparaged Musharraf at length. END SUMMARY.
OPENING CLOSED DOORS

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2. (C) A six-member delegation of the Pakistan People's Party headed by Makhdoom Amin Fahim met Prime Minister Singh May 10 as part of a three day visit to India for informal talks with senior Indian leaders. Members of the delegation included Raja Pervez Ashraf, Qasim Zia, Senator Enver Baig, Nisar Khuhro and Ramesh Lal. In addition to the meeting with the PM, the PPP delegation dined with BJP former Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, lunched with MEA MOS E. Ahamed, and met with BJP chief LK Advani. Press coverage was very favorable about this new front in the people-to-people efforts unfurling on both sides. The Prime Minister is reported to have told the group he was read to "resolve all issues" that stand in the way of normalization, while the BJP politicians were equally effusive. Press reports quoted Senator Baig as saying, "We want to assure our neighbors,

India most of all, that we want to pursue a policy of peace and harmony."

"MUSHARRAF BLACKMAILING THE WEST"

13. (C) PolCouns and D/PolCouns later May 10 met Qasim Zia (PROTECT), head of the PPP in Punjab, who said the PPP delegation was only trying to resume contacts with India that had been on-going during Benazir,s tenure. Musharraf, said Qasim, had stolen all of PPP,s foreign policy approaches, especially its desire for normalized relations with India. Qasim also said Musharraf could not be trusted when he says he is all that stands between Pakistan and disaster. Most Pakistanis, Qasim stressed, are moderate Barelvīs who do not sympathize at all with the Jehadis. It was Musharraf, akin to the character in the Mel Brooks Western, who was holding to his head a gun of his own making and threatening to pull the trigger. Musharraf had brought the Mullahs to power, Musharraf had given play to their agenda, Musharraf had used them to swat at Nawaz and Benazir, and now he was using them to extract leverage from the west. Qasim also groused that PPP would win any free and fair election without breaking a sweat, and accused Musharraf of altering results to minimize PPP,s presence in Parliament and local assemblies. As for Benazir, Qasim said he saw her monthly in exile in Dubai, and that she was committed to return prior to national elections in October 2007, although he doubted very much that the election would be free or fair. Nonetheless, he insisted the PPP was "patient" and taking the long-term view. As to details of whatever deal Benazir and the Sharif family might have struck, Qasim was silent, aside from noting the possibility of a grand coalition emerging from upcoming meetings in London.

ATTITUDES SHIFTING

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14. (C) Qasim added that Pakistani public attitudes towards India had changed greatly. The PPP was confident that the large majority supported total peace with India. Strong economic growth had brought significant prosperity to Lahore and the Punjab and nobody was in a fighting mood. Kashmir did not resonate the way it once did. The people-to-people efforts of the PPP sought to capitalize on this new attitude. PPP, said Qasim, was firm in its desire to see a productive peace with India, hence the delegation,s visit. The Indian Prime Minister, he reported, had been very clear about his firm desire to move forward with rapprochement with Pakistan, and the delegation had come away encouraged about his sincerity. The PM specifically declined, however, to be pinned down on his plans for visiting Pakistan.

KASHMIR NOT A FOCUS ANYMORE

15. (C) Pressed on the PPP's past history of tolerance for Jihadi mischief, Qasim insisted that Kashmiri groups enjoyed no real popular support in Punjab today, as people,s attention was focused elsewhere, including on bread-and-butter issues.

INDIA OPENING ALL CHANNELS

16. (C) COMMENT: By rolling out the red carpet for the PPP, the Indians showed -- across the political spectrum -- that they want a productive dialogue with all political elements in Pakistan, including the political parties. The Indians also sent a subtle message across to Islamabad that, in a democracy, the down-and-outs of today may be in power tomorrow. The PPP visit shows yet again that this Prime Minister is (re)opening all the channels to the Pakistani political elite in an effort to forge a lasting peace. Asked about the message intended by the PPP visit, our MEA interlocutors noted the warm receptions granted to BJP leaders like Advani and Jaswant Singh in Pakistan and underlined the GOI,s across-the-board push for people-to-people ties. We defer to Embassy Islamabad on characterizing Qasim,s statements on internal Pakistani politics, but report them (with Islamabad,s clearance and contextual note that Qasim may have lost favor within the PPP

and may be on the way out) for the edification of a broader audience. END COMMENT.
MULFORD